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ABSTRACT

This eight-chapter illustrated booklet chronicles the history of the U.S. Post Office from its establishment by the Continental Congress in 1775 to the present. Chapter 1, "The Colonists," describes the postal service before the Revolutionary War. Benjamin Franklin's appointment as the first Postmaster General of the U.S. and his many contributions to the postal service are covered in Chapter 2, "Father of the U.S. Postal Service." Chapter 3, "The Revolution and After," portrays the huge increase that occurred in the U.S. population from the time of Andrew Jackson to the Civil War, the resulting huge increase in mail volume that occurred, and the actions the postal system took to overcome the problems. In Chapter 4, "The Pony Express," the 18-month life span of the pony express is chronicled as are the reasons for its demise. Two Postmaster Generals, Montgomery Blair and John Wanamaker, are portrayed in Chapter 5, "Two Postal Titans." These two men provided leadership which resulted in improved employee attitudes and new services to customers, such as free rural delivery and pneumatic tubes. Chapter 6, "Postal Stamps," tells the history of the postage stamp, and how a stamp is developed. Chapter 7, "Moving the Mail," presents a history of the mail service and the different modes of transportation on which it depends. Chapter 8, "Postal Reforms," identifies reforms which have been taken to alleviate problems and improve postal service. A list of significant dates in postal service history and of Postmaster Generals concludes the document. (APG)

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The Story of the U.S. Postal Service

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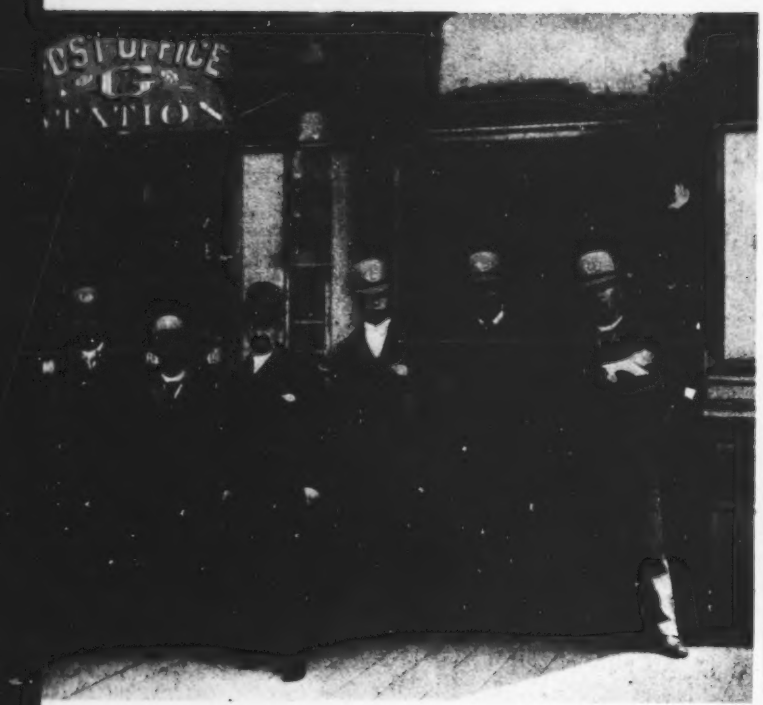

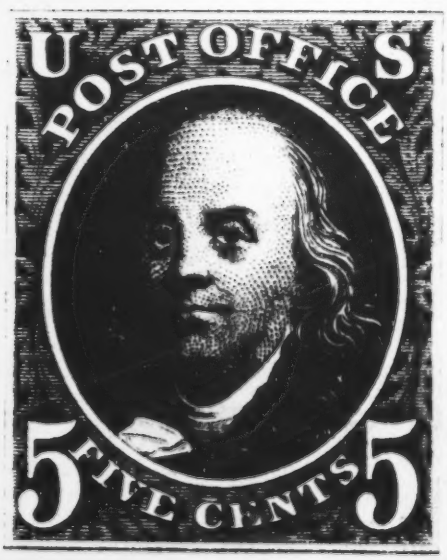

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Page

Introduction 1
Chapter 1—The Colonists 2
2—Father of the U.S. Postal Service 4
'Neither Snow, Nor Rain . . .' 5
3—The Revolution—and After 6
4—The Pony Express 8
5—Two Postal Titans 10
Pneumatic Tube System 13
6—Postage Stamps 14
7—Moving the Mail 16
8—Postal Reform 18
Significant Dates in Postal [illegible] 20
Postmasters General 21

Collecting the mail from a letter box, 1909.

Introduction

Postal history is really a study of American history; one cannot be separated from the other. The development and growth of the post office in America mirror the development and growth of the Republic.

The Continental Congress recognized the importance of the postal system to the new nation by giving high priority to its establishment. When the General Post Office was created by the Continental Congress on July 26, 1775, it was the second executive office established by this body. The first was Indian Affairs.

Over the years, however, the post office has been more than an organization to collect and deliver letters and packages. It has been the main agent of written communication in the United States and one of the major instruments in uniting the American community. During the Revolutionary War, it enabled Congress to communicate with the army. Later, it spurred commerce as the new nation expanded westward. Even in an era marked by men on the moon and sophisticated electronic means of communication, the mail remains indispensable.

The post office has been an integral part of every American's life, and perhaps the inscription on the old Washington, D.C., post office best summarizes what the system means to all of us:

Messenger of Sympathy and Love
Servant of Parted Friends
Consoler of the Lonely
Bond of the Scattered Family
Enlarger of the Common Life
Carrier of News and Knowledge
Instrument of Trade and Industry
Promoter of Mutual Acquaintance
Of Peace and Good Will
Among Men and Nations.

The Postal Service wishes to acknowledge the guidance of the Smithsonian Institution in preparing this publication. All of the photos—except for the stamp reproductions—are from the files of the Smithsonian.

1

The Colonists

More than an inch of rain fell during the day. But by 10 o'clock the night of April 18, 1775, the weather had become fair, and there were only scattered clouds in the sky. The temperature was in the mid-30's.

The colonists' fear that the British would attack Concord, Massachusetts, and destroy the cache of arms in the city was confirmed. The British were also going to move on to Lexington and arrest two of the patriot's leaders, John Hancock and John Adams. Paul Revere was among the riders dispatched to warn Hancock and Adams and the populace that the British were coming by sea.

Legend has it that Revere, a silversmith by trade, was delivering the mail while sounding the alarm. The patriot had been a dispatch bearer for at least a couple of years. He had delivered special letters and in particular pamphlets and leaflets for the Boston Committee of Safety, a colonial organization. When that group began sending secret notes to other centers of rebellion in the Colonies, Revere carried them. After the Boston Tea Party, for instance, he rode to New York—more than 200 miles away—with the news and suggestions on how to sabotage British commerce.

But the night of his famous ride, Revere was not delivering the mail.

The alarm, however, that he sounded was one of the rallying cries of the Revolution which had been threatening to explode for a number of years.

Only 10 days after his ride, the Committee of Safety met and recommended establishment of a postal system, independent of the British post office, to enable the Colonies to communicate among one another. There was no telegraph, no radio, no television. The post was the fastest way to pass the words that would help the colonists in their fight for freedom from the Mother Country.

A month after the Committee's action, the Continental Congress appointed a committee headed by Benjamin Franklin to set up an independent postal system.

The selection of Franklin was not a chance one. He had earlier played a vital role in strengthening the British post in the Colonies.

Franklin's postal career began in 1737 when he was appointed deputy postmaster at Philadelphia by Alexander Spotswood, then the Crown's Postmaster General in America.

Years later, Franklin wrote in his autobiography:

"I accepted it (the position) readily, and found it of great advantage; for, tho' the salary was small, it facilitated the correspondence that improv'd my newspaper, increas'd the number demanded, as well as the advertisements to be inserted, so that it came to afford me a considerable income. My old competitor's newspaper declin'd proportionately, and I was satisfy'd without retaliating his refusal, while postmaster, to permit my papers being carried by the (post) riders."

For Franklin, like other newspaper publishers of his time, the position of postmaster was indeed a windfall. The laws did not contain provision for the introduction of newspapers into the mails; consequently, no rates of postage were established for them. Thus, a postmaster could charge whatever he wanted, and some used this office to help put rival publishers out of business. It is to Franklin's credit, however, that he admitted all newspapers to the mails at reasonable postage rates.

He did other things, too, to make his postal tenure during the Colonial period memorable—and increase his publishing fortunes at the same time. He laid out new post roads that extended the circulation of his newspaper. He also helped expand mail service from Canada to New York and instituted overnight delivery between Philadelphia and New York City, a distance of 90 miles. As a result of these and other improvements, the Colonial post office showed a profit in 1761 for the first time. The surplus was sent off to England.

By 1774, however, Franklin's efforts on behalf of the patriots—he was, for instance, director of the Committee on Secret Correspondence—had become a nuisance to the Crown, and he was dismissed from office.

By that time, too, the British post office in America was coming into general disfavor among the colonists. Many of them linked its activities and the postage rates it charged to the cry "no taxation without representation." And while the Stamp Act, which led to the Boston Tea Party, had nothing to do with the post office (stamps for postal purposes not yet having been invented), British postal policies were irritants. In fact, the Sons of Liberty called the British postal service in America "a grievous instrument of taxation."

A few months after Franklin's elevation as the fledgling nation's first Postmaster General, the British post office in the Colonies went out of business. It closed its doors in New York City on Christmas Day 1775.

For LONDON,
The Brigantine *Thames*,
JOHN DERBY, Master,
Sails from *Newbury* by the last of May, Instant. For Passage, apply to said Derby at Newbury-Port. For Convenience of Letters, said Master has a Bag at the Post-Office in SALEM, and likewise one at NEWBURY-PORT.

Advertisement in *The Essex Gazette*, Salem, Massachusetts, May 14, 1771.

Benjamin Franklin's print shop in Philadelphia.

2

Father of the U.S. Postal Service

As George Washington was "father of his country," so Benjamin Franklin was "father of the U.S. Postal Service." He was the first Postmaster General of the United States, appointed to that post by the Continental Congress in 1775.

His postal achievements, however, were but a small part of the contributions this man made to his era, and his accomplishments as a printer, publisher, philosopher, philanthropist and statesman made him a legend even in his own time.

Historian Henry Steele Commager wrote of Franklin: "He was our first major scientist, and his science was utilitarian. He was our first literary figure, and his medium was journalism. He was one of the architects of our political system, and his chief contribution was the practice of compromise and conciliation."

Franklin was born in Boston, Massachusetts, on January 17, 1706. Several years after moving to Philadelphia, he established a newspaper called the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, later known as the *Saturday Evening Post* magazine.

But innovation was Franklin's great characteristic, and soon he established a subscription and circulating library, invented a copper-plate press to print paper money, and wrote *Poor Richard's Almanack*, a compendium of amusing stories and wise sayings, homely advice and long-range weather forecasts.

The *Almanack* gained wide readership in the Colonies and Europe. It contained such tidbits of practical wisdom as: "Early to bed and early to rise, will make a man healthy and wise," "A penny saved is a penny got," "One today is worth two tomorrows," and "God helps them that help themselves."

In 1751 he became a member of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania (he had earlier been a clerk to the Assembly). Later he helped draw up the Declaration of Independence from England, and served as the American minister in Paris in 1776, helping to win France to the colonists' cause.

While postmaster of Philadelphia, Franklin formed the city's first volunteer fire company. He also organized America's first hospital and started an academy that later became the University of Pennsylvania.

As an inventor, Franklin had few peers. He is perhaps most famous for using a kite to show that lightning is electricity, leading to his invention of the lightning rod. He also designed a ladder chair and bifocal glasses, and his "Franklin stove" served for decades as the major heating unit for Americans and is still being manufactured and used.

Franklin's inventiveness was demonstrated when he was postmaster of Philadelphia under the British Crown. Cumbersome whaling ships made faster trips across the Atlantic than lighter, speed-designed mail packet vessels. Franklin

Benjamin Franklin

solved the problem after questioning a Nantucket whaling captain. The limits of the strange current of warm water flowing north along the American coast from the Gulf of Mexico were well known to whaling captains of the day, because they forced whales to seek cooler water farther north. Franklin was able to map this mysterious current which retarded his ships and establish faster routes to Europe for the mail. His charts of the Gulf Stream eventually became part of the British postal map.

His postal career began in 1737 when Alexander Spotswood, Postmaster General for the British Colonies in America, appointed Franklin his deputy in Philadelphia.

Spotswood himself was an interesting man. A retired British army colonel, he was first chosen lieutenant governor of Virginia, arriving in that colony in June 1710. Not content to "retire" to his job as some officials were disposed to do, he became a controversial and innovative leader. His program to educate Indians, for example, earned him much criticism. And he liked to travel to see his domain. In the first seven years of his 12-year reign, he journeyed 5,026 miles on public business—a prodigious feat in that era of horse travel.

After he became deputy postmaster general for the Colonies in 1730, Spotswood continued to innovate. He expanded mail service to the Southern Colonies as well as changing post routes to avoid delays. For example, he routed riders so that no post horse would have to cross the Potomac or Susquehanna river.

By 1737, Spotswood had become disenchanted with his deputy postmaster in Philadelphia, William Bradford, a publishing competitor of Franklin's. Spotswood was concerned with Bradford's accounting practices.

The advertisement indicating Franklin's assumption of his duties as deputy postmaster read: "October 27th, 1737. —'Notice is hereby given, that the post-office of Philadelphia is now kept at B. Franklin's, in Market Street; and that Henry Pratt is appointed Riding Postmaster for all the stages between Philadelphia and Newport in Virginia, who

Governor Alexander Spotswood

sets out about the beginning of each month, and returns in twenty-four days; by whom gentlemen, merchants, and others, may have their letters carefully conveyed, and business faithfully transacted, he having given good security for the same to the Honorable Colonel Spotswood, Postmaster-General of all his Majesty's Dominions in America.' "

Franklin immediately became associated with changes that have had a lasting impact on the postal system. For instance, he designed distribution cases containing pigeonholes for the deposit of mail for common destinations. He also improved the post roads by setting milestones (stone markers) along them. There was a sound reason for postmen to know how far they traveled to deliver the mail—they were paid by the distance they traveled, 3 pence a mile in summer and 3½ pence in winter.

Later, as a Joint Postmaster General of the Colonies with William Hunter, Franklin made postmasters and riders from Maine to South Carolina aware of the unity and vitality of the postal service, drawing scattered colonies together through the exchange of letters. Franklin and Hunter had been appointed in 1753 and originally divided areas of responsibility—Franklin responsible for the Northern Colonies, Hunter for the Southern.

The Postal Inspection Service—the law enforcement arm of the Postal Service—also traces its lineage to Franklin, who as postmaster at Philadelphia was assigned the additional duties of "regulating the several post offices and bringing the postmasters to account." As a joint Postmaster General of the Colonies he continued these extra duties.

When Franklin died on April 17, 1790 in Philadelphia, he was accorded one of the largest funerals the city had ever seen.

'Neither Snow, Nor Rain. . .'

That famous slogan, "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat" that tells of the letter carrier's dedication, is carved into the facade of the General Post Office on 8th Avenue in New York City.

The saying was put there by William Mitchell Kendall, one of the architects for the building, constructed in 1914. He felt he needed an appropriate saying to put on stone.

Kendall's father was an instructor in classical languages and Kendall read ancient Greek for amusement. He ran across the original saying in Volume VIII, Chapter 98 of Herodotus.

Kendall looked up the English translations of that chapter. He didn't like what he found so he asked a Harvard professor to translate it again. He came up with: "No snow nor rain day's heat nor gloom hinders their speedily going on their appointed rounds."

Kendal twisted this around to its present form: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds."

He got permission from the Post Office Department and then had the quotation inscribed in the 280-foot frieze on the front of the building.

3

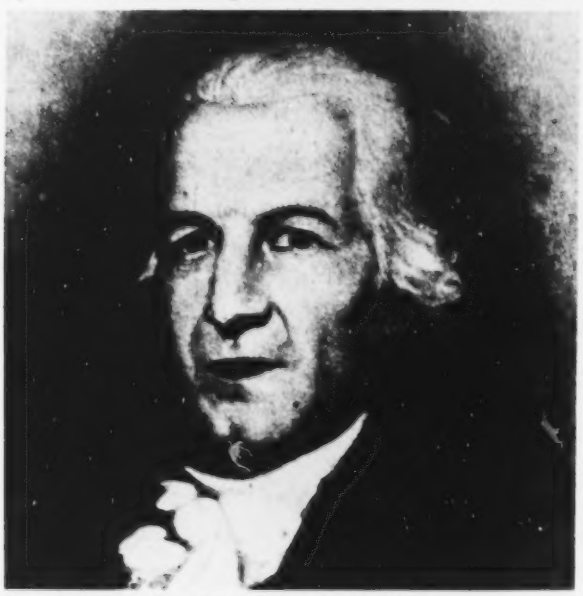
The Revolution–and After

The U.S. postal system, initiated by the Continental Congress in 1775, grew and matured as the nation did. It started small and was Congress' chief means of communicating with its constituents. Its growth paralleled the expansion of the country, for the opening of post roads meant the forging of new routes beyond the Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi River and to the West.

During the Revolutionary War, the postal service was an instrument to unite Americans in a common cause. The Congress emphasized the importance of the post office by exempting postmasters and post riders from all military duties. Post riders carried the mail at great hazard to themselves. They carried messages between a central government which moved from site to site to avoid capture and its armies in the field, and between the soldiers and their families. For many Americans, the post office then—as now—was the only visible instrument of the Federal Government to enter their daily lives.

After the war, President George Washington selected Samuel Osgood, a former member of the Continental Congress and an elected official of the Massachusetts legislature, as his first Postmaster General.

In 1789, when Osgood assumed the top postal job, there were 75 post offices in the 13 states and about 2,400 miles of post roads to serve a population of three million people. By the close of Washington's second term as President, the number of post offices, miles of post roads and revenue had increased more than five times (earliest records show that in its initial six months of operation, postal revenue totaled only $7,526).



Samuel Osgood, first Postmaster General under President George Washington.

Osgood, in his first report to the Treasury Department (because it was a revenue office the post office was originally subordinate to this agency), stated that the postal service was impoverished and disorganized.

The first annual report of the post office took just six pages, and pointed out the revenue problems that plagued the agency.

Osgood said if Congress wanted to raise money from the postal operation to aid and support the central government, regulations worked against the idea. He cited two.

"Any person may receive, carry and deliver inland Letters and Dispatches; and is subject to no Penalty, if it is done without hire or reward.

"All Masters of Ships and Vessels, and passengers in them, may bring letters to the United States, and are not obligated to carry them to a Post Office, nor are they subjected to a penalty, if the Letters are brought without hire or reward."

It was not until 1792, however, that postal policy was formally established by an Act of Congress. Postage rates were set according to distance traveled, ranging from six cents for a single-page letter going as far as 30 miles to 25 cents for one going over 450 miles. And rules and regulations were promulgated. The most important were: (1) the post office must be self-supporting; (2) it must use any profit to extend services; and (3) Congress, not the Postmaster General, must establish the nation's post roads.

The third regulation was perhaps the most important, for it insured the development of various means of transportation. At one point, Congress actually became involved in constructing post roads, but President James Monroe curbed this activity.

In 1794, the first letter carriers appeared on the streets of some American cities. They were not paid a salary, but rather collected two cents for each letter they delivered, which they kept. Postage was charged by the post office in addition to the two-cent fee. Free city mail delivery did not begin in America until 1863.

Joseph Habersham, Postmaster General in 1799, started government-owned coach service between Philadelphia and New York, but the first priority of stagecoach operators then and in later years in the West went to passengers, not mail. As a result, relations between the post office and stagecoach line operators were often strained, marred by violated contracts, broken promises and poor service.

By 1813, the steamboat had become an important means

of transporting mail, and in that year Congress declared all steamship lines to be post routes. That meant that mail matter carried by steamboats on domestic waterways was subject to Federal regulations.

Mail was first carried by a steam railway in 1834, but it was not until 1838 that a law was passed declaring all railroads to be post routes.

For decades the railroad moved the lion's share of the mail in America, and as the postal system developed, new mail facilities were often constructed adjacent to railway terminals to cut down on delivery time.

In fact, visitors today to the Fort Worth, Texas, post office can step back into the past for a wistful moment when they walk from one of the postal dock areas directly into an abandoned railroad station waiting room.

Early relations between the post office and the railroads were marked by questionable deals, with the railroads more often than not forcing the postal system to pay exorbitant prices for carrying the mail. When they were made post roads by Congress, the legislature authorized the Postmaster General to pay as much as 25% more for railroad transportation than for similar service in stagecoaches.

Even when the cartage bill reached $300 per mile per year for all the mail sent daily, there was a clamor from the railroads for more money. Finally, President Andrew Jackson suggested that Congress force the carriers to take mail on the government's terms. This suggestion was never put into action.

In 1845, a Federal law created the contractor system—the hiring of private, or "star route," contractors to carry the mail between post offices. Since then, the number of these contractors—so important to the movement of mail—has grown steadily, with about 12,237 contracts for highway and waterway star route service in effect as of January 30, 1979.

By 1847, Postmaster General Cave Johnson, commenting on the postal service's role in the nation's development, wrote in his annual report: "As our country expands and its circle of business and correspondence enlarges, as civilization progresses, it becomes more important to maintain between the different sections of our country a speedy, safe, and cheap intercourse. By so doing, energy is infused into the trade of the country, the business of the people enlarged and made more active, and an irresistible impulse given to industry of every kind; by it wealth is created and diffused in numberless ways throughout the community, and the most noble and generous feelings of our nature between distant friends are cherished and preserved, and the Union itself more closely bound together."

While changes affecting the movement of mail and development of commerce were being made, there were significant occurrences in the area of postal administration.

Most important was President Andrew Jackson's March 9, 1829 appointment of William T. Barry, a former state official, congressman and senator from Kentucky, as first Postmaster General with Cabinet rank.

As a result of Jackson's action, the entire character of the postal system was altered, for now the post offices became the chief patronage dispensing agency of the political party in power, leading to many abuses in the decades to follow. It was not until 1971, partly in reaction to this patronage philosophy, that the legal demise of the Post Office Department occurred and in its place the U.S. Postal Service was born.

One section of the New York City Post Office in 1827 was reserved for ladies.

Barry, and many Postmasters General who followed, had shorter terms in office than the men who preceded them, and because of the political nature of their jobs their attempts to make permanent improvements in postal practices were often blocked.

Dissatisfaction with the postal system became chronic. In Barry's term (1829-1835), for instance, a number of congressmen denounced him, citing his "mismanagement" of postal affairs. As a result, Barry's son, a lieutenant in the army, challenged Rep. William Cost Johnson of Maryland to a duel to preserve his father's honor. The challenge was accepted, then withdrawn.

Meanwhile, high postage rates sparked development of an elaborate system of private mail carriers. The government took two major steps to counteract this situation. First, in 1845, cheaper postage rates were enacted so that by 1851 a half-ounce letter could be sent 3,000 miles for as little as three cents. And in 1847, Congress reasserted the government's monopoly to deliver the mail.

Also in 1847, adhesive postage stamps made their appearance in America.

Private firms printed the first adhesive postage stamps, but in 1894 this job was transferred to the Federal Government's Bureau of Engraving and Printing in Washington, D.C. Since then the Bureau has printed all but a few issues.

From the Jackson years to the eve of the Civil War, the Post Office Department grew phenomenally. While the population of the nation increased during the period 144% from 12.9 million to 31.4 million, the volume of mail shot up over 1200%, from 13.8 million letters to 184.3 million. But the real growth was just about to begin.

4

The Pony Express

Its life span was only 18 months. It lost money for the major company that operated it. It was expensive. And at its peak, riders carried only 41 letters per trip to California. It was the Pony Express, which despite all these facts has come to represent the most colorful era in postal history.

Americans' interest in the Pony Express results perhaps from their infatuation with the "Wild West" phase of our national development. Or it may be that a small, lean man astride a sturdy horse, testing the hostile elements, reminds us of the classic struggle between man and nature. In any event, the Pony Express, although short-lived, will always remain a prime example of postal heroics.

The Pony Express was really nothing new. Its method of operation was as old as the Persian postal system in 500 B.C. It was also not without precedent in the United States.

In 1836, a special express service was inaugurated providing round-the-clock schedules between major Eastern cities and St. Louis, New Orleans, Mobile, Alabama, and Charleston, South Carolina. This express used railroads and steamboat lines as well as horseback riders.

The primary purpose of this service was to carry news of price fluctuations, especially for the cotton market, news clippings, government dispatches and private letters.

The operation lasted three years and has been dubbed the "Eastern Pony Express" by historians.

There were early advocates of a Pony Express between the East and the West, as the nation continued its "manifest destiny" to the Pacific Ocean. War clouds were on the horizon as controversy between the "free" and the "slave" states was aggravated. As new states were accepted into the Union, compromises were sought, with the existing slave and free states trying to maintain a balance of power, so that one group did not outnumber the other.

One of the big prizes in this free vs. slave contest was California, and the "free-staters" perceived that one of the major ways to keep this state in the free column was by keeping it in touch with the national capital. The telegraph network was being extended to the Pacific Coast, but it was still a number of years away from completion, and there had to be a temporary, fast way to communicate.

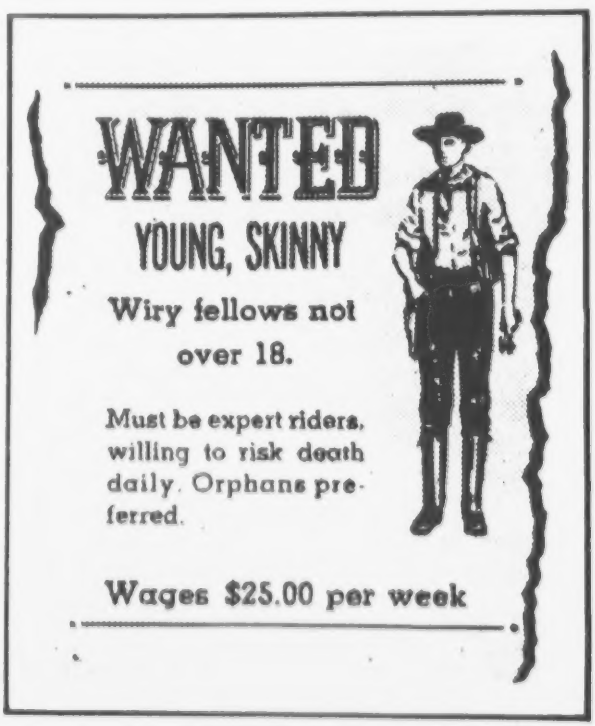
Mail was the answer, but in the mid-19th Century it took 22 days to send letters via Panama from New York to San Francisco.

In January 1855, Senator William M. Gwin of California introduced a bill in Congress to set up a weekly letter express between St. Louis and San Francisco, but the legislation was not enacted. Ironically, Gwin, then a Unionist, became a Confederate sympathizer once the Civil War started, lost his prestige and large fortune and at the end of the conflict drifted into Mexico to live.

Finally, an independent company, the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Co., in hopes of getting a substantial mail contract from the government, started service over a Northern route, covering 1,950 miles, between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California. The initial ride was made on April 3, 1860.

The average ride was fixed at 10 days and later reduced to eight. The quickest trip took seven days and 17 hours, and the text of President Lincoln's inaugural address was carried on that famous ride. The cost of sending a letter was $5 per half ounce, later reduced to $1.

At one time or another during its 18-month life span, the Pony Express involved 119 relay stations, 90 riders and 500 horses. Riders were paid $100 to $125 a month for the hazardous bi-weekly trips which took them through hostile Indian country as well as treacherous deserts and dangerous mountains. Only one rider was killed outright while on duty, but a few were seriously wounded.


WANTED
YOUNG, SKINNY
Wiry fellows not over 18.
Must be expert riders, willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred.
Wages $25.00 per week

Division agents were located every 200 miles. Their jobs were to provide for emergencies, such as Indian raids and stampeding of animal stock, as well as to exercise general supervision over the service.

At first, relief stations where fresh horses and riders quartered were situated 25 miles apart and a rider covered three stations or 75 miles a day. Later, the distance between the stations was regulated by the character of the terrain, so that some stations were actually only 10 miles apart.

Two minutes was the maximum time allowed at stations, whether it was to change horses or riders.

During the 15 months the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Co. operated the service, its expenses were $700,000. They broke down as follows:

Equipping the line . . . $100,000
Maintenance (@ $30,000 a month . . . $480,000
Nevada Indian War . . . $75,000
Miscellaneous . . . $45,000

Receipts, however, were not over $500,000, so the company lost $200,000. The Federal Government did not extend any financial aid, and in August 1861, Central Overland had to pull out of the Pony Express business.

The service was continued for a short period by other firms, until the line of the Pacific Telegraph Co. was completed in October 1861.

Bottom, changing horses at a relief station. Below, a Pony Express rider passes crew setting poles for Pacific Telegraph Co. which put the Express out of business in October 1861.

5

Two Postal Titans

The Civil War years and the decades that followed to the dawn of the 20th Century were dominated by two Postmasters General—Montgomery Blair and John Wanamaker. Their leadership of the Post Office Department was marked by giant strides in employee attitudes and the development of many new programs to improve service to customers. The reforms they instituted had a lasting impact on the postal system.

Blair served during the critical Civil War years. His appointment as Postmaster General by President Lincoln just before the war was closely tied to the fact that Blair came from Maryland, a border state; border states—such as Maryland, Kansas and Missouri—held much of the balance of power.

When the new Postmaster General assumed his duties in 1861, he found the Post Office Department in disarray. Methods of operation were inefficient and often archaic, and the loyalty of postal workers to the Union was questionable.

Montgomery Blair, President Lincoln's Postmaster General.

The Department's headquarters building in Washington, D.C., best symbolized the condition Blair inherited. The structure was poorly lighted and badly equipped, the roof leaked, and rain had stained the walls and ruined the materials and records stacked on the top floor.

One of the first major hurdles he had to overcome was what to do about the post office system in the states that had seceded from the Union.

He had wanted to keep the post offices there open as "the best means to communicate to the people of the South the judgment which I am confident the civilized world would pronounce against the rebellion, when its real purpose was distinctly seen." But in the end he was forced to relinquish these offices. The Confederacy took them over and included them in their hastily organized postal system.

During the war, Blair had to meet unprecedented demands on mail service caused by the Army. A small rural post office would suddenly find itself deluged by thousands of soldiers and pieces of mail. Blair worked out a plan

John Wanamaker, famous store owner, famous Postmaster General.

which gave every regiment its own postmaster who received and distributed the mail, sold postage stamps and money orders (which were introduced for the first time during his term of office), and forwarded letters. Later in the war, soldiers could frank their mail; that is, send it through the system free of charge.

Innovation was Blair's hallmark. Noting the low morale of employees, he asked the Secretary of the Treasury for $500,000 to apply to overdue salaries to motivate their performance. At the same time, he attacked a big postal deficit.

He enforced the prepayment of postage and did away with the fraudulent reuse of stamps with washed out cancellations by using a new indelible ink for all cancellations. He also began experiments with wood and steel canceling devices in an effort to eliminate hand cancellations. When he left office, several of these canceling machines were under construction.

He introduced other major changes. He discontinued unnecessary post offices. He withdrew the abused franking privilege from postmasters, made sure that mail contracts were granted to the lowest bidders, and reduced rates on carrying the mail charged by railroad contractors.

In 1863, a uniform letter rate—one that applied regardless of distance—was enacted by Congress at Blair's urging. And a year later, as a result of his prodding, postmasters were paid fixed salaries instead of commissions.

By 1863, Blair had reduced the 1860 deficit of over $5.7 million to only $120,000. When he resigned in 1864, the Department was almost self-sustaining: It showed a surplus of $161,000 a year later.

There were other major achievements of the Blair administration.

Most notable was the introduction of free city mail delivery service on July 1, 1863, the day the Battle of Gettysburg began. On that date, 449 letter carriers started to deliver mail in 49 cities.

Another of Blair's achievements was initiation of an international conference on postal problems. This meeting led to formation of the Universal Postal Union, which is still a model of quiet and effective international cooperation to deliver mail among nations, even between those involved in war with each other.

Blair also introduced the money order system. As noted, it originated from the need of soldiers to send money back home safely. Blair later realized that the general public had an equal need.

Another accomplishment of Lincoln's Postmaster General was the streamlining of the railway postal service. When Blair took office, procedures for the distribution of mail carried by the railroads were haphazard at best. Details were left largely to the whims of postmasters and clerks. A bag of letters would be stopped here and there, and handled and rehandled at what were called distributing post offices. The irregular pattern often meant delayed delivery for days.

To correct this situation, Blair introduced the concept of the railway post office—the railroad car in which mail is sorted and distributed en route.

While Blair was making great changes in the Post Office Department, he also was deeply enmeshed in politics, and the Blair family's opposition to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase precipitated a chain of events leading to the Postmaster General's resignation in 1864.

A number of years later, a second Postmaster General, John Wanamaker, discovered that his twin goals of improving employee attitudes and customer service could not be effectively separated from politics. But Wanamaker proved himself a masterful leader and was able to make many lasting changes. In addition, many of the projects he suggested, and sometimes actually tested, were adapted in later years—a tribute to his foresight.

Wanamaker was a Philadelphia merchant. He was little known outside the City of Brotherly Love, but he had been a major contributor to the Republican Party. President Benjamin Harrison in 1889 selected Wanamaker to be his Postmaster General out of a sense of political obligation, but once both men met, they became warm friends for life.

The intrigue surrounding Wanamaker's selection and his belief that the Post Office Department could be operated on a business-like basis—as his store was—made him unpopular with Congress. But Wanamaker, despite suffering serious setbacks in his plans to improve the postal organization, managed to get many things done during his four-year tenure.

The Catching Post, from an engraving in *Harper's Weekly*, Oct. 9, 1875.

Many of the reforms he instituted were a harbinger of the postal reform enacted nearly a century later in 1971. Wanamaker claimed that the post office was not properly organized or managed. "There are scores of ways in which the business might be bettered if the Postmaster General only had the power to act," he said.

The little power that Wanamaker had, however, he put to good use.

For one thing, he showed great concern for postal employees, and made so keen an impression upon them that

continued

Street cars began carrying mail under Government contract in October 1895.

long after his service as Postmaster General ended, they continued to visit him at his home and write to him.

He advocated adequate pay and proper hours for employees, and he took the Civil Service Act of 1883 seriously, doing a great deal to improve the merit system for promotions through civil service examinations. (Under the Act of 1883, competitive examinations were required for letter carriers and clerks in all offices with 50 or more employees.)

Wanamaker did not forget his postmasters, either. He visited many of their offices, and when he left the Post Office Department he signed 69,000 letters of appreciation, one to each postmaster in the country.

Whenever a carrier or a railway clerk was killed or performed some act of heroism, Wanamaker sent letters of condolence or congratulation.

He emphasized a postal building program, as much to boost employee morale as to improve service, and because he thought it prudent business.

Wanamaker's spirit and zeal as a merchant were transferred to his postal job. He emphasized service to the customer. Shortly after he became Postmaster General, he told a newspaper reporter: "I want to keep the mail bag open to the latest possible minute, then get it to its destination in the shortest possible time, and then get each separate piece of mail to the person for whom it is meant in the quickest possible way."

He strongly believed that the principle of increasing sales through giving satisfactory service could be applied to the Post Office Department. One of his subordinates suggested the idea of the postal card, as it is now known. Wanamaker saw its merit and introduced it. Another suggested chutes in hotels and letter boxes in clubs. He initiated house letter boxes, extended the railway post offices to the street cars that criss-crossed the cities, and inaugurated the sorting of mail on ocean-going steamers.

One of the major contributions of Wanamaker's constant search for new ideas was the introduction of pneumatic tubes to carry the mail. The first line was inaugurated in Philadelphia on March 1, 1893—three days before Wanamaker left office as Postmaster General.

He also read his mail and newspapers carefully, paying particular attention to complaints and criticism, as he did in operating his department store. He wrote to a man in Denver: "Anyone who aids in improving the postal service by pointing out defects, or by making suggestions, performs an act of good citizenship and is a friend of good government and especially of the Post Office Department."

Wanamaker, however, had a great deal of rough going in getting many of his ideas translated into action. He was not popular with Congress, and that helped to sink many of his programs. In later years, his ideas for rural free delivery, parcel post, and postal savings were enacted, but by then Wanamaker was no longer connected with the post office.

Pneumatic tube service in New York City.

He had contended the postal system belonged to all the people, and for this reason he advocated initiating rural free delivery (RFD). He did manage to get Congress to appropriate a meager sum—$10,000—to test his idea, and between February 1 and September 3, 1891, the experiment was conducted in 46 offices. But Congress never supported the idea fully.

One member of the House of Representatives is reported to have said: "The delivery of mail by this government to the doors of the farms will destroy the rural life of which America is so proud." Outside Congress there was also considerable opposition. One farmer, for instance, said he opposed RFD because it would eliminate his excuse for a daily trip to town for a drink.

Finally, in 1896 rural free delivery came into being.

Wanamaker also argued the merits of parcel post, but he was thwarted by the lobbying of the private express companies. This postal service did not begin until 1913.

The postal savings system, proposed by Wanamaker, also met strong opposition, particularly from banking institutions, and the nation had to wait until 1911 for the post office to offer this service. (It was terminated in 1966.) Wanamaker believed that the financial panic of 1893 would not have occurred if the $400 million he was convinced was hoarded in the country had been in postal savings.

Wanamaker had another idea, never adopted, which also proved controversial. He advocated government ownership of the telegraph and telephone systems. He claimed that 95% of the world's telegraph lines outside the United States were government owned and managed generally by the postal systems of their respective nations.

He also suggested that postal telegrams in cooperation with Western Union be introduced, but Congress said no. It was not until 1970 that the Postal Service and Western Union signed an agreement to institute Mailgram—messages sent over Western Union wires and delivered by postal letter carriers.

He also attempted reform of postal rates for various classes of mail, but in this, too, he was thwarted by Congress.

Like Blair before him, Wanamaker's impact on the Post Office Department was profound, and the services both of these men initiated and inspired laid a firm groundwork for the Post Office Department's development in the 20th Century.

Pneumatic Tube System

The first postal pneumatic tube line in the United States was inaugurated in Philadelphia March 1, 1893, between the main post office and the East Chestnut Street Station (a distance of .55 mile), and the pneumatic tube system of sending mail between post offices in cylinders reached its greatest use before World War I. The cylinders were pushed through the tubes by air pressure.

Boston, New York, Chicago and St. Louis, in addition to Philadelphia, used the tube system, but Congress believed costs were excessive, and service was suspended June 30, 1918.

On October 2, 1922, the system was partially resurrected in New York and four years later it went back into service in Boston. On December 31, 1953, tube service was formally suspended in those two cities.

At its peak, 55% of New York City letter mail was handled by the pneumatic lines.

6

Postage Stamps

Today, we take postage stamps for granted. But it was not until many years after the Post Office Department was founded that adhesive postage stamps came into use.

In colonial times, the custom was to collect the fee C.O.D. (cash on delivery) from the receiver of the letter. This meant that postmasters had to carry charge accounts for their services. Eventually, postmasters placed the words "paid" or "due" on a letter, signifying whether the postage had been prepaid or if it were to be collected from the receiver.

Postmarks began about 1692 when the Massachusetts Colony specified that each letter was to be marked with a print showing the date on which it was received. These markings were made by hand.

An Englishman, Henry Bishop, is credited with inventing the handstamp postmark when he became Postmaster General in London in 1660. His original design consisted of a circle divided in two—one side for the month, the other for the day of the month. In America, the New York Post Office began using it after 1772.

In the 19th Century, more sophisticated postmarks came into use, and many of them indicated how the letter traveled —such as by Pony Express or steamboat. These postmarks were phased out by 1870.

From the earliest times, envelopes were not used, not coming into general use until at least 1840. The letter sheet was folded and tucked in at the ends and addressed on the back. The ends were secured with a piece of sealing wax. Until 1845, a single letter meant a single sheet. If two sheets were enclosed, the postage rate was doubled.

As was the case in many postal developments, the breakthrough in the use of stamps occurred in England.

Sir Rowland Hill, about 1836 or 1837, was staying at an inn in England. The story goes that the postman called with a letter for one of the maids. Sir Rowland was standing by when the maid looked at the letter, which was collect, and returned it to the postman, saying, "You will just have to destroy it; I can't pay the postage." Sir Rowland, sympathetic with the maid's plight, gallantly paid the charge, the maid took the letter and the postman left.

"I'm sorry you did that," said the maid. "My sweetheart and I have adopted the plan of putting our messages on the outside of the letters. We read those messages and then turn the letter back. In that way it doesn't cost us anything to exchange messages."

Sir Rowland began to think that the English Post Office Department should devise some scheme for requiring prepayment of postage, and out of his thoughts came the idea of postage stamps.

In 1840, the "sticking plasters," as the stamps were derisively referred to, were introduced in England. The chief objection seemed to lie in the fact that Queen Victoria's face, portrayed on the stamps, would be subjected to the indignity of a black smudge when canceled. But the idea caught on and the adhesive postage stamp became a distinctive public convenience.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Congress refused to authorize such stamps. If postmasters wanted their own, they had to come up with them at their own expense.

Consequently, from 1845 to 1847, in particular, "postmaster provisionals" became popular. Some of these stamps had adhesive backing and some had the initials or the signature of the postmaster added. Other provisionals were printed or handstamped on the letter.

The New York City stamp was credited to Robert Hunter Morris, appointed postmaster in that city by President James Polk in 1845. In July of that year, Morris, in a letter to Postmaster General Cave Johnson, informed him of the use of the stamp.

"I have adopted this plan," he wrote, "first for the accommodation of the public, and second, to enable me practically to judge of the benefits of it, that you might make representation to the next congress and procure if desirable, a law authorizing government stamps, and I hope, a system of prepayment of letters."

Johnson took the idea to Congress, and in 1847 adhesive postage stamps were authorized.

Two denominations went on sale in New York City on July 1, 1847—a 5-cent stamp bearing Benjamin Franklin's portrait in a bronze tint, and a 10-cent stamp of George Washington in a black tint.

The first adhesive postage stamps to go on sale in the U.S.: the 10-cent George Washington and the 5-cent Benjamin Franklin.

Top left, first commemorative stamp issued by Post Office Dept. Center, the famous Moon Landing Stamp. Upper right, the upside down Curtiss Jenny. Bottom right, a commemorative from the Black Heritage series.

But the introduction of adhesive postage stamps on a national basis was not too popular. One reason is that many of the more than 15,000 postmasters in the system were satisfied with the "provisionals" and were loath to adopt the stamp "reform."

Letters not prepaid were dispatched as usual by the post offices, and it was not until January 1, 1856 that prepayment of postage was enforced.

Stamp collecting or philately—from the Greek *philos* meaning friend and *ateleia* meaning deliverance—began shortly thereafter. It has become a widespread hobby since, with an estimated 20 million collectors across the country —nearly as many people as live in the metropolitan areas of Chicago, New York, St. Louis and Cleveland combined.

Stamp collecting has been called the hobby of kids and kings. The great collectors of the past, for instance, have included King George V of England, King Fuad of Egypt and Baron Rothschild. Among the leading collectors of the 20th Century in the U.S. were: Theodore E. Steinway, piano and glider manufacturer; Saul Newbury, Chicago department store owner; Hollywood actors Adolphe Menjou and Jean Hersholt; and two of the most prominent— President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Francis Cardinal Spellman of New York. Former President Gerald Ford is also a stamp collector.

Almost every public library has on its reference shelves U.S. stamp catalogs, either Scott or Minkus, or both. In brief format, these catalogs list each stamp's "vital statistics," along with a reproduction of the stamp. To flip through a stamp catalog is to take a trip down the corridors of history.

For instance, before fame arrived in 1927, a lanky, young airmail pilot named Charles A. Lindbergh bought a second-hand Curtiss Jenny airplane for $500. In 1974, a small, two-color stamp reproduction of a Jenny sold for $47,000. The plane was flying upside down on the postage stamp. It is the most celebrated error on U.S. stamps. The inversion resulted when a sheet of 100 stamps, on which the red vignette had already been printed, was fed through the press the wrong way for printing the airplane in blue.

In 1846, a man in Alexandria, Virginia, wrote a love letter. It was found in 1907 in a bureau drawer, part of a ribbon-tied packet. It is the only known Alexandria Provisional of this type and is now worth more than $85,000.

As almost everyone in the world with a television set watched, Neil A. Armstrong said, "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind," and he put foot on the moon, July 20, 1969. The Apollo 11 astronauts carried with them a small steel die from which later was produced plates that printed the Moon Landing po tage stamp. For the typical new stamp, about 500,000 first-day covers are requested by collectors, who preserve the record with the stamp, specially canceled on the date and place of issue. The Moon Landing stamp so captured the interest of the world that 8,700,000 first-day covers were requested. Collectors in more than 120 nations wanted covers. It is doubtful if this figure will ever be remotely approached again.

Not all postage stamps sell for $100,000 nor do they excite the world as did the Moon Landing stamp. But behind every postage stamp that the United States has issued since 1847 there is a story—sometimes fascinating, sometimes little-known, always interesting.

Commemorative stamps, which celebrate high moments in American history, communicate significant developments and deliver important national messages, well-known to stamp collectors and users alike.

The first commemorative was a series, in 1893, and it featured Christopher Columbus and the discovery of America. It was issued on the occasion of the World Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

In 1901, a new series of regular stamps appeared. An eight-cent stamp depicted Martha Washington, the first American woman to be so honored. Since then there have been commemoratives honoring women of such varied talents as poetess Emily Dickinson, former first lady and humanitarian Eleanor Roosevelt, aviatrix Amelia Earhart and Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, America's first female physician.

Since 1894, almost all U. S. stamps have been printed in Washington, D.C., by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing of the Department of the Treasury.

The files of the Postal Service's Stamps Division bulge with suggestions for new stamps, an indication that Americans take a lively interest in their stamps. Some 4,000 requests that have accumulated over the years are on file, but the Postal Service issues only about 30 stamps a year.

A Citizens' Stamp Advisory Committee chooses the subjects of stamps. The Committee consists of a cross-section of people in the arts, history, philately and business. They make recommendations to the Postmaster General who, by law, makes the final determination.

7

Moving the Mail

For 200 years, the movement of mail in America was tied to the development and decline of transportation systems.

In the early days, most mail was carried by horseback and expanded to using the stagecoach in 1775. At the time, this mode of transportation was considered "an accomplishment of great merit" and a stride in the direction of rapid transit.

The steamboat, invented by Robert Fulton, provided another important means of moving the mail. In 1815, Congress granted authority to the Postmaster General to have the mail conveyed in any steamboat and to pay for such service at a rate not over three cents per letter or packet, and one cent for each newspaper. The rate on letters was subsequently reduced to two cents.

In 1834, Postmaster General William T. Barry said: "Celerity of the mail should be equal to the most rapid transition of the traveler." Consequently, when the railroad came along to whisk passengers from city to city, the Post Office Department led private industry in making use of this method of transportation, aiding materially in its development.

The government formally recognized the railroads as postal transporters on November 30, 1832 when contractors on the line between Philadelphia and Lancaster, Pennsylvania (a distance of approximately 80 miles), were granted an allowance of $400 annually for carrying mail. In 1962, the post office paid the largest sum to the railroads to move the mail—over $357 million.

The first record of a postal clerk being appointed to have charge of the mails enroute on a train was in May 1837. The next step in the evolution of railway mail service was the birth of the railway post office (RPO) in 1862. The first RPO was on a line that ran from Hannibal to St. Joseph, Missouri. The idea was to sort the mail as the train moved between the two cities instead of waiting until it reached the St. Joseph post office.

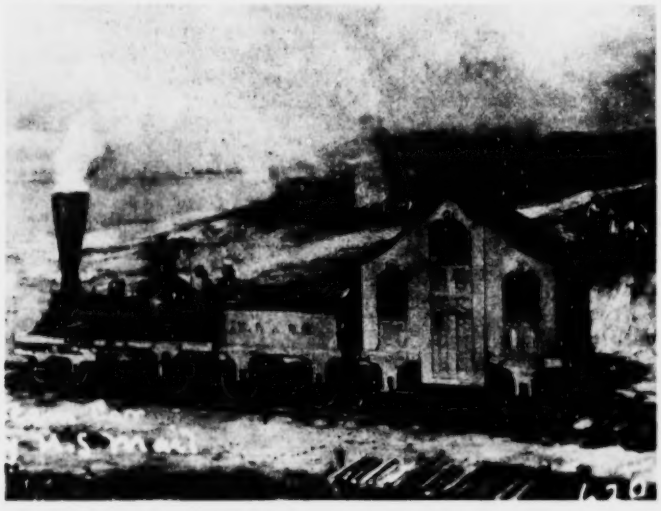
A similar postal car was placed in service on the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad between Chicago and Clinton, Iowa, on August 28, 1864. It was quickly followed by similar service between New York City and Washington, D.C.

Transcontinental travel passed a milestone on May 10, 1869, when the tracks of the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific Railroads met at Promontory Summit, Utah, linking East and West by rail.

At its peak in the 1920's and 1930's, the railway mail service totaled more than 1,500 routes, 30,000 employees and over 4,000 individual cars. But changes in the nation's traveling habits spelled doom for most passenger trains and for the RPO. The RPO made its final run, between Washington, D.C., and New York City, on June 30, 1977.

In the years since 1850, mail delivery time between New York and San Francisco has been cut dramatically, with the use of developing transportation systems playing a key role. In 1850, it took 24 days by rail and stage; 10 years

The first steam car to carry U.S. mail.



Street letter box collection in Baltimore, Maryland, 1906.

later the time was cut to 10½ days by rail and Pony Express. In 1876, it took four days and four hours by special train, and by 1923 it was three days and 19 hours by train. With airplanes, transportation time was sliced to 28½ hours by 1931. Today it is down to less than five hours by jet.

As railroad usage increased during the 19th Century, it became necessary to establish mail messenger service between post offices and railroad stations. This usually involved horse-drawn wagons and later motorized trucks. In 1861, the first service of this type was provided in New York City when watertight, one-horse wagons were put into service. By 1890 there were 36 wagon routes in the country; a peak was reached in 1909 when there were 320.

After July 1, 1896, mail service was also provided via electric and cable car lines in cities.

Autos were first tested for mail collection from street letter boxes in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1906. The cars used were Columbias, Mark 43 models, equipped with two-cylinder, 14-horsepower engines.

Highway post offices—similar to RPO's, except that mail was sorted inside converted trucks or buses—started in 1941. The last of these rolled between Cincinnati and Cleveland, Ohio, on June 30, 1974.

Over the years, the post office has also made wide use of contractor service—whether by train, truck, boat or horse. These private haulers who carry the mail between post offices are called "star route" contractors. The term evolves from the 1845 law calling for the letting of contracts "with certainty, celerity and security." Those words were soon dropped and asterisks used in their place. It didn't take long for the asterisks to be called stars and the pacts to be called star route contracts.

With each major change in America's transportation pattern, alterations have been forced on the mail system.

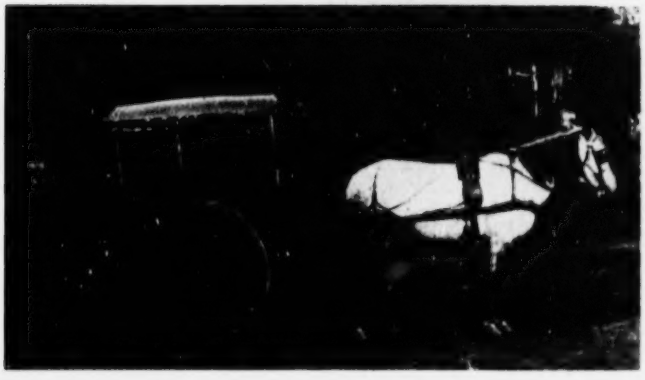
The severe decline in the use of passenger trains in recent decades, for instance, meant a deterioration in delivering the mail. Although the airlines took up some of the slack by increasing flights, it was easier when the railroad was traffic kingpin in America to carry the mail to more sites. One reason is that as railroads expanded, new postal facilities were located near railroad depots. Since airports are usually located away from the center of cities, the Post Office Department had to find a solution to a major predicament. The answer was to build new postal facilities near or at the air fields and to use trucks to take the mail from the airports to the downtown post offices.

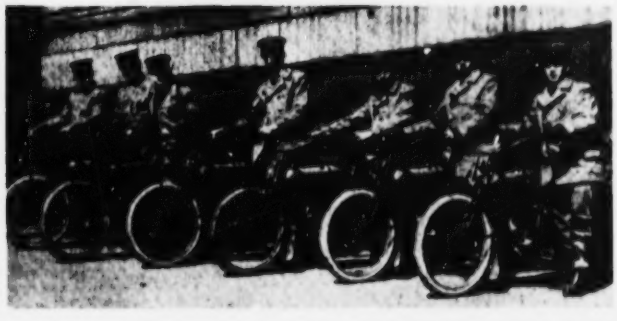
Weather is also a factor. A snowstorm often cancels airline flights; it only delays trains.

Another element hampering mail transportation within cities and between cities is the public's "love affair" with the automobile. At first, the emergence of motorized vehicles meant speedier delivery; today, cars and trucks habitually clog streets and highways. Frequently, it takes longer to carry the mail by truck from LaGuardia Airport in New York City to midtown Manhattan, a distance of about 12 miles, than to transport it by air from LaGuardia to Chicago (714 miles).

In an effort to keep pace with the drastic changes in transportation systems, the Postal Service today is using electric delivery vehicles on a limited basis and examining their potential for expansion.

Bottom left, San Francisco mail collector, 1892; below right, motorcycle mail delivery, New York City, 1915. Top left, Overland Pacific mail crossing the Gadsden Purchase in mid-19th Century. Purchase is now part of states of Arizona and New Mexico. Top right, mail boat in use 1907 to 1932.





8

Postal Reform

The United States Post Office faces a crisis," the report read. "Each year it slips further behind the rest of the economy in service, in efficiency and in meeting its responsibilities as an employer."

This was the opening salvo in the *Report of the President's Commission on Postal Organization* in June 1968, and many of its recommendations were to be adopted by the Congress when it passed the Postal Reorganization Act, creating the new U.S. Postal Service on July 1, 1971.

Wholesale alteration of the postal system was not a new idea. For years there had been a barrage of complaints about service and how the Post Office Department itself was being run. As far back as 1859 the House Committee on the Post Office actually considered a bill to turn the mails over to private hands but dismissed the suggestion as "inexpedient."

But in October 1966, the world's largest postal facility, the 13-story, 60-acre Chicago post office, virtually stopped functioning. According to the Presidential Commission's Report, "Breakdowns in management authority and in physical plant paralyzed service in one of the nation's biggest cities and delayed millions of cross-country letters and parcels normally routed through Chicago. The crisis lasted nearly three weeks.

"The backlog of mail exceeded 10 million pieces. Railroad cars and trailer trucks clogged approaches to the post office. Millions of citizens were inconvenienced; hundreds of businesses suffered financial losses."

Clearly something had to be done.

On April 3, 1967, in a speech at a luncheon meeting of the Magazine Publishers Association and the American Society of Magazine Editors in Washington, D.C., Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien proposed a remedy. He suggested that the Post Office Department be removed from the President's Cabinet and be converted into a nonprofit government corporation.

"I know my proposal is far reaching," he said. "In fact, it has to be the most extensive proposal ever made in the history of the American postal service. But, I am firmly convinced, this is the only way to achieve the superlative postal service President (Lyndon) Johnson has mandated, postal service worthy of the American standard."

Five days after O'Brien's speech, President Johnson appointed a commission, headed by Frederick R. Kappel, former board chairman of American Telephone & Telegraph Co., to investigate the practicality of the proposal.

Six months after the commission's report was issued the nation had a new President.

Richard M. Nixon totally agreed with his predecessor: revamping of the postal system was a necessity. And when nominating his choice for Postmaster General, Winton M. Blount, former president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Nixon underscored his Administration's commitment to postal reform.

Accordingly, in May 1969, Blount proposed to Congress a basic reorganization of the Post Office Department, to be known as the Postal Service Act of 1969.

But Congress demurred in taking action. There were reports that some congressmen were reluctant to relinquish their hold on the political patronage the Post Office Department afforded them. Others had little knowledge or understanding of the despair felt by many postal workers.

The major concern of these employees was wages. For example, in New York City, a letter carrier who reached the top of his grade in the prescribed period of 21 years would still be making $1,500 a year less than a city garbage collector with three years on the job.

Until 1970, there had only been minor local protests in the postal system. The first one—a stoppage in Chicago—was believed to have occurred sometime around 1900, precipitated by a protest against long hours of work in the local post office.

Railway mail clerks in Tracy, Minnesota, refused to assume added duties in 1911, and there was a group resignation in Fairmont, West Virginia, in November 1915. The only major work stoppage of postal workers was a one-day affair, June 27, 1907, in Butte, Montana, involving letter carriers disputing their wages.

On March 16, 1970, however, a major work stoppage started in the New York City post office. By the time it ended nine days later it had spread to 670 other postal locations, involving 152,000 postal employees. And the Army had to be called out to help move the mail.

There were a number of reasons for the work stoppage.

Left, the symbol of the old Post Office Dept.; right, the symbol of the U.S. Postal Service.

At the root was the wage issue, strained further when President Nixon in January 1970 asked Congress to hold up a Federal pay increase for six months—from July 1970 to January 1971. He wanted to tie the increase into postal reform.

With mail movement snarled throughout the nation, Congress became alarmed. It began to realize, too, the depth of postal workers' dissatisfaction.

Postmaster General Blount agreed to negotiate with the recognized unions involved in the dispute, and within a few days the negotiating parties recommended to Congress a retroactive general wage increase plus an additional raise to take effect if the parties could reach agreement on legislation reorganizing the Post Office Department and if the legislation could be enacted.

On Aug. 12, 1970, President Nixon signed the Postal Reorganization Act into law. The Act essentially created an independent government agency, removing the Postmaster General from the President's Cabinet and effectively eliminating politics and politicians from the management of postal affairs.

In addition, a Presidentially-appointed nine-man Board of Governors was created to operate the postal establishment and to appoint the Postmaster General and Deputy Postmaster General, who became the 10th and 11th members of the Board. The Act also authorized Congress to subsidize a portion of the Postal Service operating budget at a sliding rate for the first 13 years of its existence. By 1984, the Postal Service was expected to be able to operate essentially on a break-even basis.

The Act also permitted the Service to borrow up to $10 billion through the sale of bonds to the public, and an independent, Presidentially-appointed five-man Postal Rate Commission was established to set postage rates.

Provisions for collective bargaining for postal workers were also included in the Act, but the right to strike was denied.

Blount became the first Postmaster General to be appointed by the Board of Governors, but he resigned on October 29, 1971 to run for the U.S. Senate from his home state of Alabama.

The current Postmaster General, William F. Bolger, is in select company. He is only the third career postal employee to be elevated to the top position. The first, Horatio King, joined the Washington Post Office Department in 1839 as a sub-clerk and moved up the ladder to become PMG in 1861. However, he was appointed to the job in the waning days of President James Buchanan's administration and held the post for only four weeks.

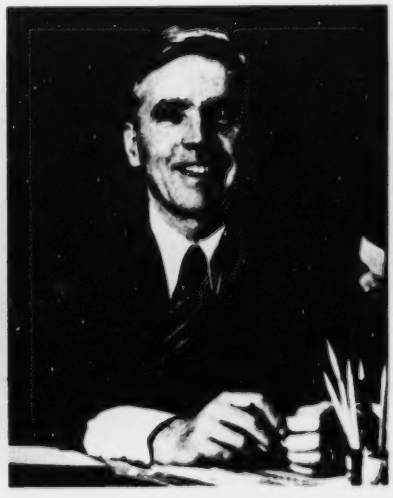
The second career PMG was Jesse M. Donaldson, a postal letter carrier who rose through the ranks to become Postmaster General after 40 years of service. President Harry S. Truman appointed him in 1947.

Bolger joined the Post Office Department in 1941, serving in the Bureau of Finance in Washington, D.C., and later in district offices in the states of Maine and New Hampshire.

For 14 months before Postal Reorganization, he served as regional director of the old Boston Region, overseeing postal activities in six states. When the Postal Service was formed in 1971, Bolger was appointed manager of the Boston Metropolitan District. He later served in Philadelphia as Acting Assistant Regional Postmaster General and then became the Eastern Regional Postmaster General.

In July 1973, he was named Northeast Regional Postmaster General in New York City, a position he held until his appointment as Deputy Postmaster General in September 1975. The Board of Governors selected him Postmaster General, and he assumed that job on March 15, 1978.

Below left, Lawrence F. O'Brien; he sparked postal reform. Center, William F. Bolger, career employee who became PMG. Below, Winton M. Blount (right) with former President Nixon.



Significant Dates in Postal History

1639—General Court of Massachusetts designates Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston as collection point for overseas mail.
1692—British Crown issues a grant to Thomas Neale to set up and maintain a post office in the Colonies for a term of 21 years.
1737—Benjamin Franklin appointed deputy postmaster at Philadelphia.
1753—Benjamin Franklin appointed Joint Postmaster General for the Colonies under the British.
1775—Benjamin Franklin named first Postmaster General under Continental Congress; British post office goes out of business in America.
1789—Samuel Osgood named first Postmaster General under the U. S. Constitution.
1792—Postal policy formally established by an Act of Congress.
1794—First letter carriers appear on streets of some American cities.
1799—Government-owned coach service begins. First route between Philadelphia and New York City.
1813—Congress declares all steamship lines to be post routes.
1829—Postmaster General becomes Presidential Cabinet post.
1838—Law passed declaring all railroads post routes.
1845—Star route contractor system created by Federal law.
1847—Adhesive postage stamps make their appearance in America.
1860-1861—The Pony Express unites East and West.
1861-1865—Confederate postal service in operation.
1863—Free city mail delivery service starts in 49 cities. Uniform letter rate—regardless of distance—enacted by Congress.
1864—Railway post office introduced.
1874—Universal Postal Union founded.
1883—Civil Service Commission Act provides for competitive examinations for letter carriers and clerks in offices with 50 or more employees.
1893—Pneumatic tube service starts in Philadelphia.
1896—Rural free delivery enacted by Congress.
1911—Postal savings initiated.
1918—Airmail service begins between New York City and Washington, D.C.
1920—First cross-country airmail flight—New York to San Francisco.
1941—Highway post office rolls into operation.
1967—Postal reform suggested.
1970—First major widespread work stoppage of postal workers in 671 postal facilities across the country, involving 152,000 employees.
1970—Mailgram (combination letter-telegram) introduced.
1971—U.S. Postal Service begins operation; Postmaster General leaves Cabinet.
1971—First labor contract in history of federal government achieved through collective bargaining.
1972—Stamps by Mail.
1972—First U.S. Postal Service bonds sold.
1972—Passport applications accepted nationwide.
1974—Highway Post Offices terminated.
1974—First satellite transmission of Mailgrams.
1976—Presort First-Class Mail introduced.
1977—Airmail abolished as a separate rate category.
1977—Express Mail becomes permanent new class of service.
1977—Railway Post Office makes final run.
1978—First use of binding arbitration to resolve issues of national labor contract as provided in Postal Reorganization Act.
1978—Steps toward electronic communications initiated.
1979—New minimum size standards for envelopes, cards and other pieces of mail go into effect.
1979—U.S. Postal Service widens energy-saving program, adding, among other things, to electric vehicle fleet, and preparing to test return of many motorized delivery routes to foot routes.
1979—U.S. Postal Service has first surplus in 34 years —$470 million.
1979—President supports U.S. Postal Service role in electronic mail.
1980—Congress suggests cutback to five-day delivery of mail.
1980—Regulatory actions hamper startup of U.S. Postal Service electronic communications services.

The first airmail from San Francisco arrives in New York, 1920.

Postmasters General

(Date of appointment in parentheses; * denotes carryover from previous administration.)

CONTINENTAL CONGRESS
- Benjamin Franklin (July 26, 1775)
- Richard Bache (November 7, 1776)
- Ebenezer Hazard (January 28, 1782)

GEORGE WASHINGTON
- Samuel Osgood (September 26, 1789)
- Timothy Pickering (August 12, 1791)
- Joseph Habersham (February 25, 1795)

JOHN ADAMS
- Joseph Habersham (*)
- Gideon Granger (November 28, 1801)

JAMES MADISON
- Gideon Granger (*)
- Return J. Meigs Jr. (March 17, 1814)

JAMES MONROE
- Return J. Meigs Jr. (*)
- John McLean (June 26, 1823)

JOHN QUINCY ADAMS
- John McLean (*)

ANDREW JACKSON
- William T. Barry (March 9, 1829)
- Amos Kendall (May 1, 1835)

MARTIN VAN BUREN
- John M. Niles (May 19, 1840)

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON
- Francis Granger (March 6, 1841)

JOHN TYLER
- Francis Granger (*)
- Charles A. Wickliffe (September 13, 1841)

JAMES K. POLK
- Cave Johnson (March 6, 1845)

ZACHARY TAYLOR
- Jacob Collamer (March 8, 1849)

MILLARD FILLMORE
- Nathan K. Hall (July 23, 1850)
- Samuel D. Hubbard (August 31, 1852)

FRANKLIN PIERCE
- James Campbell (March 7, 1853)

JAMES BUCHANAN
- Aaron V. Brown (March 6, 1857)
- Joseph Holt (March 14, 1859)
- Horatio King (February 12, 1861)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN
- Montgomery Blair (March 5, 1861)
- William Dennison (September 24, 1864)

ANDREW JOHNSON
- William Dennison (*)
- Alexander W. Randall (July 25, 1866)

ULYSSES GRANT
- John A. J. Creswell (March 5, 1869)
- James W. Marshall (July 3, 1874)
- Marshall Jewell (August 24, 1874)
- James N. Tyner (July 12, 1876)

RUTHERFORD B. HAYES
- David McK. Key (March 12, 1877)
- Horace Maynard (June 2, 1880)

JAMES A. GARFIELD
- Thomas L. James (March 5, 1881)

CHESTER A. ARTHUR
- Thomas L. James (*)
- Timothy O. Howe (December 20, 1881)
- Walter Q. Gresham (April 3, 1883)
- Frank Hatton (October 14, 1884)

GROVER CLEVELAND
- William F. Vilas (March 6, 1885)
- Don M. Dickinson (January 16, 1888)

BENJAMIN HARRISON
- John Wanamaker (March 5, 1889)

GROVER CLEVELAND
- Wilson S. Bissell (March 6, 1893)
- William L. Wilson (March 1, 1895)

WILLIAM McKINLEY
- James A. Gary (March 5, 1897)
- Charles Emory Smith (April 21, 1898)

THEODORE ROOSEVELT
- Charles Emory Smith (*)
- Henry C. Payne (January 9, 1902)
- Robert J. Wynne (October 10, 1904)
- George B. Cortelyou (March 6, 1905)
- George von L. Meyer (January 15, 1907)

WILLIAM H. TAFT
- Franklin H. Hitchcock (March 5, 1909)

WOODROW WILSON
- Albert S. Burleson (March 5, 1913)

WARREN G. HARDING
- Will H. Hays (March 5, 1921)
- Hubert Work (March 4, 1922)
- Harry S. New (February 27, 1923)

CALVIN COOLIDGE
- Harry S. New (*)

HERBERT HOOVER
- Walter F. Brown (March 5, 1929)

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
- James A. Farley (March 4, 1933)
- Frank C. Walker (September 10, 1940)

HARRY S TRUMAN
- Frank C. Walker (*)
- Robert E. Hannegan (May 8, 1945)
- Jesse M. Donaldson (December 16, 1947)

DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
- Arthur E. Summerfield (January 21, 1955)

JOHN F. KENNEDY
- J. Edward Day (January 21, 1961)
- John A. Gronouski (September 10, 1963)

LYNDON B. JOHNSON
- John A. Gronouski (*)
- Lawrence F. O'Brien (November 3, 1965)
- W. Marvin Watson (April 26, 1968)

RICHARD M. NIXON
- Winton M. Blount (January 22, 1969)

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
- Winton M. Blount (July 1, 1971)
- E. T. Klassen (January 1, 1972)
- Benjamin F. Bailar (February 15, 1975)
- William F. Bolger (March 15, 1978)

24

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